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## Senate Natural Resources & Environment Committee Testimony

### Speaker:

Mark Langgin, Executive Director  
Iowa's Water & Land Legacy

First of all, I'd like to thank Senator Black and members of the committee for hosting us today to talk about the state of the budget, and more specifically, the condition of Iowa's natural resources.

For those of you who may not know me, my name is Mark Langgin, and I'm the Executive Director for Iowa's Water & Land Legacy – the state's largest coalition of conservation, environmental, and outdoor recreation organizations. We are here today asking you to appropriate \$15 million to Iowa's REAP program.

While we get a report from the Governor on the Condition of the State on a yearly basis, it's not often that we have an opportunity to talk about the condition of Iowa's vast natural resource wealth.

As other speakers have noted, we are increasingly underfunding critical investments in water quality, soil conservation, and critical watershed programs.

These aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet.

These are programs that protect Iowa's safe drinking water supplies.

These are programs that help keep our family farms productive.

And finally, these are programs that will help prevent future flooding in critical areas along the Raccoon, Cedar, Iowa, and Boone River basins – ultimately impacting families and communities along the Des Moines and Mississippi Rivers.

These aren't programs that will be picked up by the private sector. These are investments in public resources that require a shared investment between state and local government and the non-profit community.

One example of these critical programs, is Iowa's model Resource Enhancement & Protection Program, or REAP. REAP has been recognized by Republicans and Democrats alike as the national standard for how state government can work with city, county, and non-profit entities to achieve results for conservation, water quality, and outdoor recreation.

In fact, 2/3rds of the funds allocated under the REAP formula go to county conservation boards, city park and rec departments, farmers for soil and water conservation, local historical restoration projects, roadside vegetation management and conservation education. **This is not a program dedicated to funding the Iowa DNR – this program is about local control, local projects, and local results.**

And while REAP means better parks and forests, it also means better water quality as 20% of the funds go out to farmers and water quality projects to keep soil where it belongs and out of our waterways.

With such a successful, and bipartisan, program why are we now seeking a 25% cut to the program? Over the past five years, on average, REAP has received \$15.5 million per year in funding. A budget of \$11.5 million would represent a \$4 million cut – or a nearly 25% cut versus the five year average funding for REAP.

Just as an example, for every \$4 million cut from the REAP program we lose:

- \$800,000 for soil conservation cost share
- \$800,000 for county conservation programs
- \$600,000 for city and local parks and recreation programs
- Over \$1 million for programs that protect critical watersheds, wildlife areas, and outdoor recreation areas

These are programs that protect water quality, conserve our agricultural soils, help prevent future flooding through investment in our watersheds, and provide safe and enjoyable places for kids and families to recreate.

63% of Iowa voters voiced their opinion at the ballot box this past November – saying that investment in Iowa's natural resources should be a priority. Now, we have an opportunity to let our budget reflect the values the majority of Iowans hold dear – by investing in our natural resources, and the REAP program, to help protect these resources for future generations.

Thank you.

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